

ANIMADVERSIONS

Upon a Paper intituled

*A Letter from a Clergyman in the
Country, to his Friend at Deal.*

In which, among other Things;

The Case of Subscribing to the Thirty-
nine Articles of Religion, &c. is largely
considered.

To which is annexed by the Publisher, a

COPY of the said **LETTER.**

See a sad Mistake or Fault in p. 41.

Blessed are they whose Study is the Word of God; who
drink of no Streams but what flow from that clear
Fountain; and discover the Lights, that, by the Va-
nity and Imaginations of Men, have been much dark-
ned and eclipsed: Who proceed in the Spirit of our
first happy *Reformation*, and would lead us on from
Strength to Strength, and from Perfection to Perfection.

Pyle's *Serm. at St James's, March 31, 1717.*

L O N D O N:

Printed for W. MEADOWS, at the *Angel* in
Cornhill. 1753.

[Price One Shilling.]

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It is not, however, whose Study is the Word of God; who
think of no business but what flows from that clear
fountain, and receive the light; that by the Va-
lue and illumination of them, have been made dark-
ned and blinded: Who, fixed in the spirit of our
not happy opposition, and would lead us on from
our duty, and the light of reason.

L O N D O N :

Printed by W. Mawbey, at the Angel in
St. Paul's Church-yard.

1740. (Price One Shilling.)

T H E P R E F A C E.

TH E Letter from a Clergyman in the Country, to his Friend at DEAL, was as extraordinary in the Manner of its being communicated to the Public, as it is in its Stile, and Reasoning. It was not Advertised and offered to Sale, but distributed gratis about the County of Kent, in a detached half Sheet between the Folds of the Canterbury News-Letter of November 25, 1752.

I will detain the Reader no longer, than is necessary to assure him, that a sincere Desire, and some Hopes, that the Thoughts he will find in the following Sheets, and especially those upon the Subject of subscribing to the thirty-nine Articles of Religion, &c. might be of Use both to the Clergy, and Laity; have been the chief Motives of my embracing this Opportunity of publishing them.

P. S. Since the following Animadversions were put to the Press, a second Letter from
A Cler-

A Clergyman in the Country to his Friend at DEAL, *has been published and dispersed in the same Manner as the First. This is still more abusive, and abounds in Assertions, and Insinuations which any one who will consult the Doctor's Sermon will see to be false, and groundless. As my design was more to answer the Arguments, or pretended Arguments in the first Letter, concerning a Subscription to the Articles, than to defend the Doctor from personal Abuse, and as no new ones of Weight are offered in this, it deserves no Notice on that Account.*

I am convinced that the Doctor will be sufficiently cleared in the Opinion of the Learned from advancing a notorious Untruth which this hasty Writer has charged him with, relating to the Time of the public Use of the Athanasian Creed, by Cave's Life of Athanasius, and his Historia Literaria, quoted by Dr Clarke's Script. Doct. Trin. first Edit. p. 420. and p. 447. And, were it not foreign to my purpose, I might add, that his Misrepresentations in the Case of Eusebius, cannot escape the Censure of those, who will carefully consult the Life of that Bishop, wrote by the learned Doctor Cave.

As to that unchristian Spirit of Railing which runs through this whole Letter, it is so obvious to every unprejudiced Person, that particular Remarks upon it are unnecessary.

Animadversions, &c.

THE Writer of *A Letter from a Clergyman in the Country to his Friend at Deal*, is desired to calm his Resentments, and remember that, “God will judge the World in Righteousness,” and that, “every idle Word that Men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment.” He calls himself a *Clergyman*, and there are some parts of his Letter which make it probable that he is one. Who, or what can excuse a Person of that sacred Profession, in uttering such unchristian Abuse! Every virtuous Reader feels an Abhorrence in his Mind, to guess at a *Clergyman* who could be guilty of such Indecency; nor will it be easy to find one, whose Character is base enough to justify the Suspicion.

The Letter-Writer begins his Attack, by charging the Doctor with *shuffling and prevaricating with Articles, Creeds, Sub-*
B
scriptions,

scriptions, Declarations, and even Scripture itself. This is a heavy Accusation, and ought for that Reason, to be well grounded : And yet he has produced no Passages out of the Doctor's Sermon to support it. An Affirmation of such a Malignant Kind, ought not to have been left, without an Attempt at least to prove it. Some who have not read the * Sermon, may perhaps be so complaisant to this Letter-Writer, and unjust to the Doctor, as to suppose the Charge to be right : But they ought to have suspected, that the Reason why he has not quoted Passages, to make it good, is, because he could find none to quote : For there are Tokens in the Letter, more than sufficient to demonstrate the Writer's Will to have done this ; and therefore his omitting it, might well be imputed to his want of Ability.

If the Doctor *shuffles and prevaricates even with Scripture itself*, Why are not the Texts named which are thus abused ? Why is not his Interpretation of them, or Deductions from them examined, and shewn to merit this grievous Censure ? It will be confessed to be an high Act of Wickedness to *shuffle and prevaricate with Scripture* ; and surely this Letter-Writer can never answer it, either to the World,
or

* Dr. Carter's before the Mayor and Corporation at Deal Chapel.

or a good Conscience, to charge the Doctor with this high Act of Wickedness, and not offer the least *Proof* of it whatever. But it was resolved to publish the Accusation, it being well known that there are People enough always ready to believe ill of others, upon a bare Affirmation, without Reasons.

But how can the Letter-Writer know, that the Doctor *gets rid of*, as he expresses it, *the Articles he subscribes to, by a Mental Reservation*? Is not this to arrogate to himself the Discernment of another Man's Conscience, and to arrogate it too with a plain Design to render him detestable? No Certainty can be had in the Case, and nothing but the strongest probable Arguments, and perhaps not even they, can excuse a Person, before God, or Men, for imputing, *publickly* imputing, to another such an impious Heart. But the Letter-Writer as usual, neglects Arguments, and leaves this abominable Charge to be supported by nothing more, than his own rash Assertion. I shall speak of Subscriptions in another Place.

If the Doctor gives a *very lame Account of the Creeds, full of Errors and Mistakes*; this is no more than what may happen to a good Man; and he is only to be pi-

tied that he has not so exact a Knowledge
 both of the History and Sense of them,
 as his learned Antagonist has. But why
 has not the Letter-Writer vouchsafed to
 point out this *Lameness*, and *these Errors*
and Mistakes? I can think of but one
 Reason, and that is, because it was not in
 his Power. Let him try his Skill, with
 an Application equal to his Zeal, and see
 if he can find Matter sufficient to confirm
 his Assertion *.

The Letter-Writer reproves the Doctor
 for not giving his Audience the eighth
 Article, as well as the sixth, and I am in-
 clined to do the same; because it would
 have helped to convince them, not how
he prevaricated with God and Man, when he
subscribed it, but that the Creeds have no
 Authority, but as they can be interpreted
 agreeably to Scripture. This is the Ar-
 ticle, "The three Creeds, *Nice Creed*,
 "*Athanasius's Creed*, and that which is
 "commonly called the Apostle's Creed,
 "ought thoroughly to be received, and
 "believed: For they may be proved by
 "most certain Warrants of holy Scrip-
 "ture." The Reason alleged in the Ar-
 ticle, why the *Athanasian Creed*, as well
 as the others, is to be believed, is, because
 they may be proved to be agreeable to
 Scrip-

* See *Cave's Life of Athanasius*.

Scripture. Now if they can be so proved, it must be in a *certain* Sense; and he who subscribes to them in that Sense, subscribes honestly, and free from all *Prevarication*.

The sixth Article declares, “ Holy
 “ Scripture containeth all Things necessary
 “ to Salvation; so that whatsoever is not
 “ read therein, nor may be proved there-
 “ by, is not required of any Man that it
 “ should be believed as an Article of Faith,
 “ or be thought requisite, or necessary to
 “ Salvation.” And the twentieth Article,
 “ It is not lawful for the Church to or-
 “ dain any Thing that is contrary to God’s
 “ Word written, neither may it so ex-
 “ pound one Place of Scripture, that it
 “ be repugnant to another. Wherefore
 “ although the Church be a Witness and
 “ a Keeper of holy Writ, yet, as it ought
 “ not to decree any Thing against the
 “ same, so besides the same, ought it not
 “ to inforce any Thing to be believed for
 “ necessity of Salvation.” These Articles
 all agree in the Sense contended for by the
 Doctor, that, “ Ministers who subscribe,
 “ must be understood, even by the Church
 “ itself, to subscribe in no other Mean-
 “ ing whatever, but such as is apprehend-
 “ ed to be consonant to the infallible and
 “ authoritative Word of God.” Serm. p. 15.

The

The Letter-Writer proceeds : *Behold he, the Doctor, is now preaching against the Truth of this*, viz. that the Articles are agreeable to the Word of God ; *and proving one of those Creeds (at least) to be contrary to the Word of God.* If any Thing which this passionate Writer says could raise Astonishment, it would be this vile Assertion. The Doctor *is preaching that the Articles are not agreeable to Scripture ; and proving one of those Creeds (at least) to be contrary to the Word of God.* This is no better than a downright Calumny, which every fair and good Man will detest. Whoever reads the Sermon will not discover in it, the least Specimen of such *Preaching*, or the least Attempt of such *Proving*. And what can be a greater Violence of the Doctor's Meaning, to suggest, either that he himself believes the Articles are not agreeable to Scripture, or that he endeavoured to lead his Audience into that Belief, because he argues, that those who subscribe to them, must be understood to do it, in a Sense, not *contrary*, but *agreeable* to Scripture. For no one can subscribe to them in a Sense agreeable to Scripture, unless he thinks them capable of such Sense. And if he thinks them capable of such Sense, which ought to be supposed of every Subscriber, by what Logic is his thus subscribing an Argument that

that he thinks them *inconsistent* with Scripture. This is absurd Reasoning, which no Man could fall into, unless confounded by a Legion of Passions. I must do the Letter-Writer the Justice to observe, that in the next Paragraph, he changes the Term *proving*, into that of *insinuating*. This Change may infer some Conviction, but not any Repentance.

He accuses the Doctor of *insinuating to the People, as if that Assertion in the Athanasian Creed*, "In this Trinity none is afore, or after other, none is greater, or less than another," *clashes with the Assertion of our Saviour*, "My Father is greater than I" The Doctor had observed that "every Member of our Church, is obliged by Virtue of its sixth Article, to put that Meaning, and no other, upon the explanatory Parts of the *Athanasian Creed*, which is warranted by holy Writ." p. 13. To exemplify this, he recites a Clause of it, "In this Trinity, &c." And tells his Hearers, that "our Church requires that this Clause should be understood in no other Sense, than what is consistent with the express and plain Declaration of our blessed Saviour. My Father is greater, &c." Then he recites a second Clause of that Creed, and lays before his Audience several other Texts
of

of Scripture, with which the Interpretation of that Clause must agree. And his plain Design by all this was to illustrate the Inference he had made, p. 13. from the sixth Article, *viz.* " That no Doctrines, " or Exposition of Doctrines, whether " drawn up in Creeds, or in other Writings, either by a single Man, or a Body " of Men, are allowed by our Church to " have Authority in Points of Faith, or " to be regarded by Christians, further " than as they themselves discern them to " agree with the Sense of Scripture." In all this the Doctor has spoken out plain, and ought not to be taxed with an *Infinuation*, which his Words will not admit.

But the Letter-Writer is displeased that the Doctor *left out a Clause in that Creed, which, he says, would have acquainted his Hearers, that, " In this Trinity none is " afore or after other; none is greater or " less than another," is very reconcileable with the Text, " My Father is greater than " I"* The Clause which he would have had quoted is " Equal to the Father as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the " Father, as touching his Manhood."--- Now perhaps the Doctor thought, as many others do, that this Clause would not have *acquainted his Hearers* that the other Clause *is very reconcileable with the Text,*
" My

My Father is greater than I"---And then he acted right, by omitting it. But observe what follows---*And would*, the Letter-writer's Sense here is somewhat obscured, but I think it will be rightly shewn, by supplying the Words---And the quoting that Clause *would have a little interfered with the Sense he would give of the few Texts he has picked out, and strung together.* Now the Sense which the Doctor *would give* of these Texts is easily to be seen, by the Sense which he *actually has given* of them, which is, that " they clearly ascribe absolute Supremacy to God, and to God only." p. 14. So that this reverend Letter-writer has in effect affirmed, that the Sentence in the *Athanasian Creed*, " Equal to " the Father as touching his Godhead, and " inferior to the Father as touching his " Manhood" *interferes* with this Truth, which I hope is acknowledged by all Christians, that God, and God alone, is absolutely SUPREME. This is no very honourable Character of this Sentence ; and it is the more remarkable, as it comes from one, who has given sufficient Indications, of the extraordinary Value, which he thinks ought to be set upon the *Athanasian Creed*.

The Letter-writer goes on---*Is not this,*
the not quoting of that Clause, *to suppress*
C *and*

and conceal from his Audience the things that might lead them into the whole Truth, and teach them to compare Scripture with Scripture? The Doctor sure could not have so weak a Design, as to conceal from his Audience, what was in their Hands, and what may be looked into, and examined by them, whenever they please. But what does the Letter-writer mean by — *And might teach them to compare Scripture with Scripture?* Is it come out at last, that comparing the Clause “ Equal to the Father, “ as touching his Godhead; and inferior “ to the Father, as touching his Manhood,” with the Text---“ My Father “ is greater than I” is, in his Esteem, *comparing Scripture with Scripture?* God forbid that Protestants should be either so blinded, or corrupted, as to think that the Assertion of any Man, or any Church, is to be had in equal Reverence, with the Word of God. The Doctor may be ridiculed by the indecent Expression of his *stringing together Texts of Scripture*, but it is to be hoped he will never afford an Occasion of Censure, for *stringing* along with Texts of Scripture, any part of the *Athanasian Creed*, as if that were of the same Authority, with those sacred and adorable Oracles. However it must be said, that this reverend Writer has been so careful not to disgust his Readers by *Strings of Scrip-*

Scripture, that I cannot find so much as a single Text, in all his Letter, brought either to confirm his own Notions, or confute the Doctor's. Whether this Omission be a Sign of the Strength, or Weakness of his Cause, let others judge.

The Abuse intended by his saying--- *The Athanasian Creed sticks in the Doctor's Throat*, is not difficult to be guessed at ; but what he meant by adding--- *And had he said any Thing true of the Nicene, it would have choaked him*---is beyond my Comprehension. For the Doctor has said nothing of the *Nicene* Creed, true, or false, nor has he expressed any Dislike of it, or advanced any Doctrines inconsistent with it. Could I persuade myself that this Letter-writer has generally some other Meaning in what he says except *to abuse*, I should conclude, that in his Judgment, the *Nicene* Creed is the harder to be *swallowed* of the two.

The Doctor is reflected upon for *comforting himself with this*, that *when he signed and subscribed to these Articles, it was only as far as they were agreeable to Scripture*. In this I think he has a just and immovable ground of Comfort ; nor will any one, I suppose, applaud this reverend Letter-writer, if he signed and subscribed to

them in any Sense whatever, which, in his Esteem was NOT agreeable to Scripture; nor envy him the Satisfaction, which he feels, by *so* signing, and subscribing. Then comes the only Quotation from the Sermon, which the Author has thought good to lay before his Readers— “ In no
 “ other Meaning whatever, but such as
 “ is apprehended to be consonant to the
 “ infallible and authoritative Word of God.”
 Serm. p. 18. Here he contemptuously asks; *Apprehended by whom? by himself?* Adding, *what a pitiful Evasion is this? what a shuffling, and playing Fast and Loose with Things sacred?*

Here is a peremptory Decision, that a Man who subscribes to the Articles “ In
 “ no other Meaning whatever, but such
 “ as he himself apprehends to be consonant to the infallible and authoritative
 “ Word of God,” is a *Prevaricator, a Shuffler, a Trifler with Oaths, and Subscriptions*, and what not? Let us consider this Matter very carefully,

This reverend Letter-writer has subscribed to the Articles. Therefore to avoid falling under his own Judgment, severe as it is, he must say, that he subscribed to them in *SOME other* Meaning besides that which he himself apprehended to be consonant

sonant to Scripture. And every Meaning but such as a Man apprehends to be consonant with Scripture, must be a meaning which a Man apprehends to be *not* consonant with Scripture. So that according to the Author's Argument he who subscribes to the Articles in a Sense, which he himself apprehends to be agreeable to Scripture, deserves to be stigmatized with the most infamous Terms of Reproach ; and he who subscribes to them in a Sense which he himself apprehends *not* to be agreeable to Scripture, is to be applauded for his Purity of Conscience, and Zeal to promote true Religion. The Letter-writer will not I suppose confess himself to have been such a *Trifler*, to forbear harsher Terms, as to have subscribed to the Articles, without having considered, and apprehended, what the Sense of them is, or whether they have *any* Sense.

The Writer will do well to remember, that at his Ordination, he promised " To
 " instruct out of the Scriptures the Peo-
 " ple committed to his Charge, and to
 " teach nothing as required of Necessity to
 " eternal Salvation, but that which he
 " should be persuaded may be concluded
 " and proved by the Scripture." He did not promise to teach the People, what the Church ordained, or what he might *think*
 it

it ordained; but he promised to teach them what, and nothing but what *he himself* should be persuaded, that is in the Doctor's Sense, should apprehend, and judge to be contained in Scripture. Now let him shew how he could subscribe to the Articles consistently with this Promise, if he subscribed to them in ANY " other meaning what-
 " ever, but such as he himself apprehend-
 " ed to be consonant to the infallible and
 " authoritative Word of God." For if he subscribed to the Articles, not understanding them in a Sense which he himself apprehended to be agreeable to Scripture; but understanding them in some supposed Sense of the Church, and without considering whether that Sense were consistent with the Word of God, he subscribed to them in a Sense, which for ought he knew, or had Reason to believe, is incompatible with the Scriptures. And such Subscription is plainly irreconcilable to the Promise, which he made at his Ordination.

But let us try, if we can discover in what Sense the Letter-writer thinks, that the Articles ought to be subscribed to. *Our Church*, says he, *requires those whom it intrusts with the Ministry of the Word, that they may teach nothing that is contrary to sound Doctrine, to subscribe to these Articles, which in its own Judgment, it holds to be agreeable*

agreeable to the Word of God, and what ought thoroughly to be received, and believed as they may be proved by most certain Warrant of holy Scripture. By this I suppose he suggests, that the Sense of each Article which the Church judges to be agreeable to Scripture, is the Sense in which she requires the Subscription to be made by her Ministers. I omit for the present to enquire who, or what, the Letter-writer understands by the Church; but take it for granted that he subscribed to the Articles, in that Sense of them, which the Church judges to be agreeable to Scripture. Let it be supposed too, that he, when he subscribed knew what *that* Sense is. Then he subscribed to the Articles in the Sense of the Church, and subscribed to them in *that* Sense, because the Church judges that Sense to be agreeable to Scripture. Was not this blindly to surrender his Conscience to the Dominion of the Church? Was it not to form his Faith by the Doctrines of Men, and neglect the Doctrines of Christ? He will not answer, that the Sense of the Church was apprehended by himself to be agreeable to Scripture; for we have seen that a Subscriber who pretends to justify himself upon *such apprehension* deserves no better Name than a *Trifler, Prevaricator, &c.* Whether the Articles are agreeable, or contrary to Scripture, he did not think
it

it his Business to examine. He knew the Sense which the Church means in the Articles; he knew the Church had decreed that Sense to be scriptural; he was persuaded that the Church requires Ministers to subscribe in that Sense which it had judged to be agreeable to the Word of God; and he subscribed to that Sense in pure Submission to the Church's Authority.

This will be deemed an honest Subscription on the other Side of the Water, where the Church is held to be infallible; but can never be approved by *Protestants*, who are supposed to believe what they profess, that the Scriptures are the only Rule of Faith; because it follows from thence that no Assent ought to be given to Doctrines, by Subscription, or otherwise, unless such Doctrines are apprehended by the Subscriber, as well as the Imposer, to be consonant to those sacred Writings.

That the Letter-writer requires the Subscription to be made in that Sense, whatever it is, which the Church holds to be scriptural, and not in a Sense which the Subscriber thinks the Articles will bear, consonant to Scripture, appears further from this, that he calls this latter Way of subscribing, a *Subterfuge*, which disappoints the End of the Church, by insisting
upon

upon the Subscription, viz. *For the avoiding of Diversities of Opinions, and for the establishing of Consent, touching true Religion.* And disappoints it, as he argues, because a Minister may subscribe to the Articles, by the help of this secret Reserve, namely, by subscribing to them in a Sense, in which he himself apprehends them to be agreeable to Scripture, and yet be of a different Opinion from the Church. This he with his usual Charity, calls, *an imposing upon the Church, in order to betray it; adding, This Trifling with Oaths, and Subscriptions has something so black in it, that it calls for further Animadversion.*

I desire the Reader just to reflect, that if the Sense of the Church cannot *certainly* be known, then all that the Letter-writer has here advanced, signifies nothing, except to shew a Zeal without Knowledge. But why was the Word *Oaths* slipped in? Was there any *Oath* taken in this Case? Does not this look too much like Dishonesty, as if it was intended to make his Readers believe, that every Minister *swears* as well as subscribes to the Articles; and consequently to cast a greater Odium upon those who subscribe in a Sense which he condemns.

Whether the requiring a Subscription to Articles of human Composition is a likely Means of *avoiding Diversities of Opinions, in true Religion*, may well be doubted. If the Church of *England* thinks so, that is no more than an Opinion, which I suppose every one is at liberty to adopt, or reject, as he sees Reason to determine. The first Subscription required of this sort, so far as I have heard, was by the Council of *Nice* : And I think ecclesiastical History shews, that neither that Subscription, nor any other, among no small Number, which have in different Ages, and Churches, been imposed in a course of above a Thousand Years since that Council, has been able to prevent *Diversities of Opinion, and to establish Consent touching TRUE Religion*. And a thousand Years Experience is no contemptible Argument, to induce a Belief that a Unanimity of Opinions, will never be brought to pass, by virtue of such Subscriptions.

But *Diversities of Opinions* cannot be avoided by subscribing to Articles of the Church, unless the Sense of the Articles is so clearly to be discerned, that no Subscriber can mistake it ; nor will *consent touching TRUE Religion* be promoted, if the Articles are *not* apprehended by the Subscriber himself to be agreeable to Scripture.

ture. Neither do I see, wherein the requiring a Subscription to Articles, even if the Sense of them, supposing that to be possible, is thus clear, and this clear Sense is apprehended by the Subscriber, to be agreeable to Scripture, can better prevent *Diversities of Opinions and establish Consent in TRUE Religion*, than the holy Scriptures alone, without the aid of this Subscription. My Notion I confess is, that he who subscribes honestly to the Infallibility of the holy Scriptures, subscribes to that which is the very best Means of preventing all such *Diversities of Opinions*, which God designed should be prevented, as well as of *establishing* such *Consent touching TRUE Religion*, which he designed should be established. And Means not equal to the best, when the best may be had, will, by some at least, be thought unprofitable. If no Meaning is to be put upon the Articles, but what is to be warranted by Scripture, it is the Duty of all who think themselves obliged to understand them rightly, to study Scripture with a proper Application; and how subscribing to Articles, which are to be interpreted by Scripture, studied with a proper Application, is a more likely way to *avoid Diversities of Opinions* than subscribing to the Scriptures, by which the Articles are to be interpreted, I cannot discern. And if the best way in which a

Subscription to the Articles can be allowed to prevent *Diversities of Opinions* is by subscribing to them in a Sense agreeable to Scripture, that being in Effect, the same as subscribing to Scripture itself, then he who subscribes to them in "no other
 " Meaning whatever but such as he apprehends to be consonant to the infallible and authoritative Word of God," subscribes to them, not only as every good Man ought to subscribe, but in that very manner which of all others is the most effectual to prevent *Diversities of Opinions*, so far as is agreeable to the divine Will: And consequently in that Manner, which answers the Intention of a Church, which disclaims all Methods for the *avoiding Diversities of Opinions*, &c. but such as are agreeable to God's Word.

Hitherto I have argued upon a Supposition that the reverend Letter-writer, when he subscribed, *knew* in what Sense the Articles were proposed to him by the Church, as agreeable to Scripture, which Sense, if I understand his Reasoning, every subscribing Minister ought to give his Assent to, in Obedience to the Church's Authority, without examining, and discerning himself whether it be consonant to God's holy Word. But now I must ask, what he means by the Church? and, when he has
 given

given us his Idea of the Church, how he, or other Subscribers, can *certainly* know the Sense, which the Church puts upon the Articles, agreeable to Scripture? Is the Church, in his Notion, the "*Archbishops, Bishops, and Clergy, by whom the Articles were agreed upon, in the Convocation holden at London in the Year 1562?*" Or will he enlarge the Idea, and take in the whole Nation, Laity, as well as Clergy, by their Representatives in that Parliament, which passed the Law, enacting the Subscription. 13 *Eliz. C. 2?* It is enough to say, that it is now impossible to know, in what Sense the Church in either of these Notions, requires the Articles to be subscribed to; and therefore the Letter-writer, if he subscribed himself, or insists that others ought to subscribe, in that Sense of the Articles, which the Church judges to be agreeable to Scripture, must mean by the Church, something else than either what I have now mentioned, or what he has *yet* intimated; unless he thinks that if a Subscriber does but *profess* to believe as the Church believes, there is no need of troubling himself to examine, what it is the Church *does* believe, any more than, supposing he really did know it, there is to examine whether the Faith of the Church be agreeable to the Doctrines of Jesus Christ.

If

If he pleads that the Sense of the Compilers, or of the Church, agreeable to Scripture, may be discerned by a careful Examination of the Articles, then it will be asked—Who is to make this Examination? The Subscriber certainly: For a Discovery of that Sense by others, when he himself does not apprehend it, cannot justify him in subscribing. When the Examiner has discerned, as he thinks, *the* Sense, or *a* Sense, if there be many, of the Church agreeable to Scripture, contained in each Article, will any one say, except this railing Letter-writer, that he *prevaricates* or *betrays* the Church by subscribing in that Sense? For how can he subscribe otherwise, and preserve an honest Character? But this Writer has another Reserve, which shall be considered in its Place.

But it does not appear to me, that the Sense of the Articles, judged by the Church to be agreeable to Scripture, when the Law was made, requiring the Subscription, can *certainly* be discerned by an Examination of its Articles, or by any other Means whatever. How then can a Subscriber be assured, that he subscribes to the Articles, in that Sense, in which the Church published them, and which it deemed to be agreeable

agreeable to Scripture? And yet it is in this Sense, and no other, which the Letter-writer pretends every Minister ought to subscribe. For says he, *what our Church affirms to be agreeable to the Word of God, and to be proved by most certain Warrants of holy Scripture, that do we affirm and openly declare, when we subscribe, to be our Judgment and Belief, agreeable to the Word of God, and that it may be proved by most certain Warrants of holy Scripture.* But if it cannot be certainly discovered what our Church affirms, that is, in what Sense the Church understood the Articles to be agreeable to Scripture, then, the Letter-writer, and his good Friends subscribed to they knew not what. Methinks a Subscription of *this* sort is not worthy of that extraordinary Zeal, which he has display'd in its Favour.

The third Article of our Church is thus expressed — “ As Christ died for us, and “ was buried, so also is it to be believed, “ that he went down into Hell.” These Words “ are capable of three different “ Senses.” Let the Letter-writer name the Passages in the Articles or Liturgy, if he knows of any, which may guide us to discern, which of these Senses the Church intended its Ministers should Subscribe to. If he cannot do this, how can he satisfy,

I will not say others, but *himself*, that he subscribed to this Article in that Sense which the Church judges to be agreeable to the Word of God? Nay there are Reasons to be drawn from the History of the Times in which the Articles were framed, that the Imposers meant to express by that Article a Sense very different from that which is now generally understood by it. And if the Letter-writer joyns with the Majority of his Brethren in the Interpretation of this Article, he subscribed to it, as they did in a Sense apprehended to be agreeable to Scripture, though not in a Sense, which he had Cause to think was intended by the Imposers, but rather in a Sense which he had Cause to think was *not* intended by them. Why then does he raise an Outcry against the Doctor, nay against all the Clergy, and even in Effect against himself, who subscribed to this Article, in no other Meaning, but what they themselves, not what the Imposers, judged to be consonant with the infallible and authoritative Word of God!

The Reader, I hope, will not be displeased at the following Extract from the Introduction to an Exposition of the Articles by Bishop Burnet, p. 8. "The
"first" of the Senses of which this Article
of Christ's Descent into Hell is capable
"is,

“ is, that Christ descended locally into
 “ Hell, and preached to the *Spirits there*
 “ *in Prison*. — A second Sense of it is,
 “ that by *Hell* is meant the *Grave*, accord-
 “ ding to the Signification of the original
 “ Word in the *Hebrew*; and this is sup-
 “ ported by the Words of *Christ's descend-*
 “ *ing into the lower Parts of the Earth*. —
 “ A third Sense is, that by Hell, accord-
 “ ing to the Signification of the *Greek*
 “ Word, is to be meant the Place or Re-
 “ gion of Spirits separated from their Bo-
 “ dies. — All these three Senses differ very
 “ much from one another, and yet they
 “ are all Senses that are Literal and Gram-
 “ matical; so that in which of these so-
 “ ever a Man conceives the Article, he
 “ may subscribe it, and he does no way
 “ prevaricate in so doing. If Men would
 “ therefore understand all the other Arti-
 “ cles in the same Largeness, and with the
 “ same Equity, there would not be that
 “ Occasion given for unjust Censure, that
 “ there has been. Where then the Arti-
 “ cles are conceived in large and general
 “ Words, and have not more special and
 “ restrained Terms in them, we ought to
 “ take that for a sure Indication, that the
 “ Church does not intend to tie Men up
 “ too severely to particular Opinions, but
 “ that she leaves all to such Liberty as is
 “ agreeable with the Purity of the Faith.”

That is, in other Words, the Church of *England* leaves every one to the Liberty of subscribing to its Articles, in that Sense of them, which he judges to be agreeable to Scripture.

If we solemnly declare and subscribe, continues the Letter-writer, our Belief of a Point of Doctrine, we do it in the Sense of the Imposers. I think it has been proved, that the Sense of the Imposers, meaning by the Imposers, what he has hitherto called the Church, cannot be known; and then how can a Minister be assured, that he subscribed in that Sense? But let us see what Authority, or Reason the Writer has to say, that Ministers *subscribe, i. e.* are required to subscribe, *in the Sense of the Imposers*, even if they are able certainly to discern it? The Minister is obliged by the Canon to subscribe to these Articles—
 “ That the Book of Common-Prayer, &c.
 “ containeth in it nothing contrary to the
 “ Word of God.” And “ That he al-
 “ loweth the Book of Articles of Religion
 “ agreed upon by the Archbishops, and
 “ Bishops of both Provinces, and the
 “ whole Clergy in the Convocation holden
 “ 1562; and that he acknowledgeth all,
 “ and every the Articles therein contained,
 “ being in Number 39, besides the Rati-
 “ fication, to be agreeable to the Word
 “ of

“ of God.” And the Canon prescribes the Form in which the Minister is to subscribe: *viz.*—“ I N. N. do willingly and
 “ ex Animo subscribe to these Articles a-
 “ bovementioned, and to all Things that
 “ are contained in them.”

Nothing appears to me in these Articles, or in the Form of Subscription, which either expresse, or implies, that a Minister is required to subscribe to the thirty nine Articles, &c. in that single Sense of them, agreeable to Scripture, which he believes to be the Sense of the Imposers;—but I think he is left at full Liberty by this Canon, to subscribe to them in any Sense, which he apprehends to be consonant to Holy Writ, and which, in his Opinion, the Articles will bear. The Words of the Canon, and the prescript Form are literally complied with, by a Minister, who is persuaded that the Articles, &c. are capable of a Sense *nothing contrary, but agreeable* to the Word of God, and subscribes to them with such Persuasion. And what could be more inconsistent than for the Church of *England* to declare in clear Terms, that the Scriptures are the only Rule of Faith; to oblige all Ministers by a solemn Promise to teach the People nothing, but what they themselves believe to be consistent with the Scriptures; to deny that

any Church may decree or inforce any Thing to be believed, as necessary to Salvation, that is against, or besides the Scriptures ; to assert that general Councils, and consequently all Churches may err ; and to separate from the Church of *Rome* upon these Principles : And yet suffer no Man to be a Minister, who refuses to subscribe to her Articles in that Sense of them *only*, which *She*, not the *Subscriber*, judges to be agreeable to God's Word ? I see no Way of freeing the Church from this Inconsistency, but by saying, that as this Canon contains no Expressions which signify that the Subscription must be made in that Sense *only*, which the Imposers meant agreeable to Scripture ; so neither did it intend it should be so made ; but that, with a true Christian Spirit, renouncing in Deed, as well as in Word, all Dominion over Faith, it permitted each Subscriber to fix that Sense upon the Articles, which in his Judgment they are capable of, agreeable to Scripture, and to subscribe to it, whether it were, or were not its own Sense. And this is still more probable, because the Church has expressed more than one of its Articles in Terms equally capable of *different* Senses.

Another Argument that the Church does not require the Subscription to be made in
that

that precise Sense, and no other, which it judges to be agreeable to Scripture, is this. In the Beginning of King *James* the First his Reign, there were great Differences of Opinion among the Clergy, in Points of Doctrine, and each Side appealed to the Articles, as containing a Sense favourable to them. Now such Appeal would have been manifestly absurd, if it had then been thought, that the Articles were subscribed to, in no other Sense, but that which the Church judges to be warranted by Scripture. For then the Appeal ought to have been made to the Church's Sense; and not to that Sense, which each Disputant contended that the Articles would admit of, agreeable to Scripture. To calm these Disputes King *James* " with the Advice *Charley*
 " of so many Bishops as could be conveniently called together," set forth a Royal Declaration, which is printed in the Front of the Articles, observing, " That
 " in those curious Points in which the
 " present Differences lie, Men of all sorts
 " take the Articles to be for them." Then,
 " Willing that all further curious Search
 " be laid aside, and these Disputes shut
 " up in God's Promises, as they be generally set forth to us in the holy Scriptures, and the GENERAL," he does not say PARTICULAR, " Meaning of the Articles; and that no Man hereafter shall
 " either

“ either print or preach to draw the Arti-
 “ cle aside any Way, but shall submit to
 “ it in the plain and full Meaning thereof;
 “ and shall not put his own Sense or Com-
 “ ment to be the Meaning of the Article,
 “ but shall take it, in the literal and gram-
 “ matical Sense.” Here every Minister is
 left to subscribe to the Articles in their li-
 teral and grammatical Sense; and the pro-
 hibition—“ Shall not put his own Sense
 “ or Comment to be the Meaning of the
 “ Article,” must be understood to be a
 Restraint only from putting any Sense or
 Comment, which is inconsistent with a
 literal and grammatical Sense. If then the
 Letter-writer will allow, that the Design
 of the Church was understood by King
 Charles James and his Bishops, and the generality
 of the Clergy, which acquiesced in this
 Declaration, the Subscription was *not* re-
 quired to be made to the Articles in the
 Sense which the Church judges to be scrip-
 tural, but in a scriptural Sense, which the
 Subscriber apprehends to be a literal and
 grammatical Sense of them, or, in other
 Words, in a Sense which he apprehends
 the Articles to be capable of. And hence,
 as the learned Prelate abovementioned has
 observed, it is to be inferred, “ That an
 “ Article being conceived in such general
 “ Words, that it can admit of different
 “ literal and grammatical Senses, even
 “ when

“ when the Senses given are plainly contrary one to another, yet both,” that is, Ministers who understand it in different Senses—“ may subscribe the Articles, with “ a good Conscience, and without any “ Equivocation.” And then he gives an Instance of this, in the *third* Article, which has already been mentioned.

But now the Letter-writer being seized I suppose with some Misgivings, suddenly with a Dash of his Pen, changes his Notion of the Church, and instead of confining it to the Compilers of the Articles, or the Representatives of the Nation, or both; makes a Compliment of it to the Bishops for the Time being. *When we declare and subscribe our Belief of a Point of Doctrine, we do it in the Sense of the Imposers, that is, says he, our ecclesiastical Governors, who each in their several Provinces and Dioceses require the Subscription of all, who are to be ordained.* And the curious Declamation which follows, is built upon the supposed Enormity, of subscribing to the Articles, in other Sense, than that of the *Imposers*, who are here explained to be our *ecclesiastical Superiors, in their several Provinces and Dioceses.* That the Church, or the Law requires the Articles to be subscribed to in that Sense of them agreeable to Scripture, and in no other, which is the Sense

Sense of the Archbishops, and Bishops for the Time being, is such a wild Notion, as I believe, never yet found a Place in any Head, however heated and disordered, but that of this reverend Letter-writer. Is *this* a Manner of Subscribing, calculated to obviate *Diversities of Opinions, and to establish Consent touching true Religion?* For if each Archbishop and Bishop is to fix that Sense of the Articles, agreeable to Scripture, in which, Persons to be ordained by him, are to subscribe; it must needs be, that, unless these Prelates are infallible, the Clergy, not only of different Dioceses, but also of the same Diocese, subscribe in different, and perhaps even in contradictory Senses. I think it not easy to invent any other Sense, in which the Clergy can be required to subscribe, so probable *to let in that Inundation of Heresies, and Confusion of Babel*, which the Letter-writer has expressed with equal Propriety, and Politeness. I might ask, whether it is the Practice of our ecclesiastical Governors, when they ordain, to give a distinct Explication of *their* Sense of each Article, to which *their* Sense the Candidates for Orders are, according to this Letter-writer, to subscribe: But I think it superfluous to add more upon this Head, because I am fully persuaded that every Reader will have Arguments spontaneously rising in his Mind,

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abundantly sufficient to convince him of the Weakness, not to say Absurdity, of supposing, that Subscribers to the Articles, &c. ought to subscribe to them *in the Sense of the Imposers*, i. e. *our ecclesiastical Governors who each in their several Provinces, and Dioceses, require this Subscription of all who are ordained.*

He goes on—*But I cannot better urge the Point I am speaking of, than in the Words of Doctor Conybeare—This Point is—That the Subscription ought to be made in the Sense of our ecclesiastical Governors, each in their respective Dioceses.* Let us now see how the Words of this worthy Bishop explain, or inforce it.—*A Subscription to Articles*, says his Lordship, *is a Declaration of our Belief*: Be it so. But does such Declaration import, that the Subscriber believes, or ought to believe the Articles, in that Sense, which the Imposer, i. e. each Bishop believes it in? A Subscription to Articles is, I apprehend, as much a Declaration of Belief, when the Subscriber *himself* puts a Sense upon them, agreeable to Scripture, as when such Sense is put upon them by *another*. And, continues his Lordship, *implies an Assent to the Truth of those Propositions, which are contained in them.* Let it be granted that *A Subscription to Articles*, im-
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plies

plies an Assent to the Truth of those Propositions, which are contained in them : But does it imply an Assent to that Truth only which is apprehended by the *Bishops* to be contained in them? No surely; but rather an Assent to that Truth, which the *Subscriber*, and *not* another apprehends to be the Sense of them, agreeable to Scripture. The Letter-writer is very ready at quoting Authorities, as well as advancing Arguments, to dazzle the Judgment of his Readers, which signify nothing to the Purpose, for which he produces them. Let therefore the Reader judge whether the Doctor has any Reason *to be filled with Shame and Confusion*, either from the Manner in which the Letter-writer has *urged* the Extract from this judicious Writer's Sermon; or from the Extract itself.

The Letter-writer talks of *subscribing with Equivocation and Reserve*, and insists that *nothing can be urged to justify or excuse a Prevarication in this Respect*.—This *Equivocation, Reserve, and Prevarication*, must refer to a Person's subscribing to the Articles in that Sense, which *he himself* apprehends to be agreeable to Scripture, and not in the Sense in which the *Imposers* so understand them. Then comes this Letter-writer's Inference—*Whosoever therefore is not really persuaded that the Doctrines*
con-

contained in our Articles are true, cannot subscribe without an high Violation of moral Honesty, &c.—Just as if, the subscribing to the Articles in a Sense of them, which the Subscriber apprehends to be “consonant “to the infallible and authoritative Word “of God,” without considering what is the Sense of the Imposer, is the same Thing, as to subscribe to them, when he *is not really persuaded, that the Doctrines contained in them are true.* God only knows what induced the Writer to make this wicked Inference.—Has the Doctor pretended to defend any Person, who subscribes to Articles, when he is *not* persuaded that the Doctrines of them are true? And who but this profound Letter-writer can infer, that when a Person subscribes to Articles, which he *is* persuaded contain Doctrines agreeable to Scripture, he subscribes to them, when he is *not* persuaded that the Doctrines contained in them are true? For in this Argument, *agreeable to Scripture*, and *true*, are precisely the same.

For the same Reasons, adds he, must we censure and condemn a subscribing to our Articles, with this Reservation,—viz. As far as they are agreeable to Scripture; this being a Way of eluding these Tests of our religious Opinions, and in Effect no Sub-

scription at all. What he means by—"for the same Reasons,"—I am not able to understand. But his Meaning is plain enough, when he censures and condemns the Reservation—*As far as they are agreeable to Scripture.* He holds out to the End, that the Subscriber ought to give his Assent to that Sense, in which the Church, or Imposers understand them, and to reserve nothing to his own Judgment. He is not allowed to subscribe in the Sense of the Church, or Imposers, so far as *he himself* apprehends that Sense, if he be so happy as to know it, is agreeable to Scripture; but if he will subscribe, he is to do it purely, and simply in the Sense of the Church, and acquiesce in *that*, be it right, or wrong. But enough has been said upon this Point. I think, of all Ways of subscribing to Articles, *as a Test of religious Opinions*, none can be more *elusive*, than that of subscribing, *i. e.* pretending to subscribe to them, in the Sense of others, when that Sense is impossible to be known.

He asks,—*Are the Articles of the Church of England, agreeable with Scripture, or are they not?* I answer—If they are agreeable with Scripture, they must be so in a certain Sense; and whoever subscribes to them in *that* Sense, as such, subscribes honestly.

honestly. But if a Person cannot reconcile any Meaning, of which he thinks them capable, with the Bible, he ought not to subscribe. But why was this Question proposed to the Doctor? Is there a Word in his Sermon, which disagrees with the proper Answer to it?—But, says this sagacious Letter-writer, *if any Persons will however insist on this Reservation of subscribing to the Articles as far as they are apprehended to be agreeable to Scripture, then let them consider, that the Subscription, and the Reservation taken together amount to this, viz. I do declare that these Articles are agreeable with Scripture, so far forth as they are agreeable with Scripture.* Then comes a triumphant Reflection—*This is as much trifling with common Sense, as with common Honesty.* But, however the Letter-writer may please himself with his own childish Imaginations, there is hardly a single Reader can miss seeing, that this Proposition, after all his Endeavour to make it appear ridiculous, plainly means this,—*I do declare that these Articles are agreeable with Scripture, in a certain Sense.* And then the Subscription will be allowed to amount to this,—*viz.*—*I believe these Articles, understood in a certain Sense, which the Words of them will admit, to be agreeable with Scripture, and I testify*

+ No: but
Conybeare
v. v. p. 6

testify my Assent to them in *that* Sense. Let the impartial Reader judge who it is, that has *trifled with common Sense, as well as common Honesty.*

Next follows a Quotation from *Coke's Institutes*, relating to one *Smith*, who had subscribed to the Articles, *with this Addition*, " So far forth as ^{the} same were agreeable to the Word of God." It is granted that when the Law requires a Subscription in a prescribed Form of Words, and a Subscription is made *not* in that Form, such Subscription is *illegal*. But how does this affect the Doctor? It is not pretended that he subscribed in other Manner, or Form than as the Law directs. Neither do his Arguments concern *legal* Subscriptions, but such only as relate to *Conscience*. It will not be said, that the Judges had Authority to enquire into the *Conscience* of *Smith* when he added the Explication, *so far forth as the same are agreeable to the Word of God*; but only to determine whether the outward Act of subscribing with the Addition of that Explication, was a *legal* Subscription within the Meaning of the Statute. " And it " was resolved by the Chief Justice, and " all the Judges of *England*, that this " Subscription was not according to the " Statute

*i.e. I think
some
of the*

“ Statute of 13 *Eliz.* because the Statute
 “ required an absolute Subscription, and
 “ this Subscription made it conditional.”

Here is an Opinion given, on a Point of *Law*, and supported by an Argument, which every one sees the Force of. The Consequence of it was, that what *Smith* had done, did not intitle him to the Benefits of a *legal* Subscription. But whether *Smith* acted *sincerely* or *not*, was a Question with which the Judges had nothing to do, and which *their* Determination no ways concerned.

The Lord Chief Justice adds,—“ That
 “ this Act was made for avoiding of Di-
 “ versity of Opinions, &c. And by this
 “ Addition, the Party might by his own
 “ private Opinion take some of them
 “ (the Articles) to be against the Word
 “ of God, and by this Means, Diversity of
 “ Opinions should not be avoided, which
 “ was the Scope of the Statute, and the
 “ very Act itself touching Subscription
 “ made hereby of none Effect.” Here
 we have a second Argument against the
 Legality of *Smith's* Subscription, because
 it tended, not to prevent, but to introduce
 Diversity of Opinions, contrary to the ex-
 press Design of the Act. And this Ten-
 dency is thus explained, because *Smith*
 might

might under that Reservation think *some* of the Articles to be *against God's Word*. He might so, and his Lordship's Reasoning might hold in *Smith's Case*, but cannot be applied to the Doctor's, which is directly contrary. For the Doctor insists that the Subscription to the Articles ought to be made in that Sense of them, which is apprehended to be, not against God's Word, but agreeable to it. And therefore such Subscription cannot disappoint the Intention of the Act, upon the Ground expressed in the Quotation.

Infer him, I think, was plainly otherwise.

But I think his Lordship's Reasoning infers, that if the Subscription had been made with the Parties Belief, that, not *some* only, but *all* the Articles are agreeable to God's Word, the Diversity of Opinions, provided against by the Act, would have been avoided. For the only Reason alleged, why *Smith's* Subscription was judged to oppose the Intent of the Act is, that he *might by his own private Opinion take some of the Articles to be against the Word of God*. If then a Person subscribes, and does not by his own private Opinion take *any* of the Articles to be against the Word of God, but understands them *all*, in a Sense reconcileable with it, and subscribes to them in *that* Sense, he does not, in the
Meaning

With Subscription, I think not, but in effect the same.

Meaning of the Chief Justice, contravenes the said Act.

which perhaps may be allowed. or perhaps not. There is no great certainty at present.

Another Thing worthy of Notice in this Quotation is, that his Lordship does not suggest, in order to prevent the Diversity of Opinions condemned in the Act, that the Subscription to the Articles ought to be made in that Sense of them, which was *known or thought* to be the Sense of the Church, or of the Compilers, or of the Archbishops and Bishops collectively, or separately. And it will hardly be thought, that if the Notion of subscribing in the Sense of the Church, &c. had been understood by his Lordship, to be that Sense, and that only, in which the Law required the Subscription, for avoiding Diversity of Opinions, he would have forbore to mention it, or allude to it. On the contrary, it was not because *Smith* by his own private Opinion took some of the Articles to be agreeable to Scripture; for his own private Opinion operated as much in approving of *them*, as in condemning the *others*; that is censured as a Means of promoting Diversity of Opinions; but it was because he might take some of them to be *against* the Word of God. So that could he have explained them *all* in his private Judgment to be agreeable to Scripture, he needed not to have enquired in what Sense

True.

all to be agreeable to Scr. - the agreeable to it in its true Sense, &c.

*I can D
C. really
explain
the agreeable*

the Church, or Compilers, &c. understood them; nor, had he subscribed in due Form, does any Thing advanced by his Lordship imply, that such Subscription tended to frustrate the Design of the Act.

The Letter-writer observes—*This decisive Judgment proves beyond all Exception, that in the Eye of the Law, the Subscription required by the 13 Eliz. necessarily implies a Profession and Belief of the Truth of the Articles subscribed to.* In my Opinion this decisive Judgment proves no more, than that where an *absolute* Subscription is prescribed by Act of Parliament, a *conditional* one is *illegal*. But not to insist upon this, it will be allowed, that a *Subscription implies a Profession and Belief of the Truth of the Articles subscribed to.* But how will this Concession hurt the Doctor? has he contradicted it, or employed any Arguments inconsistent with it? Nay, does he not uniformly plead, that the Subscription ought to be made, in a Sense of the Articles, apprehended by the Subscriber to be agreeable to Scripture? And is not a Sense apprehended to be agreeable to Scripture, a Sense which is apprehended to be true? Let the Letter-writer *ruminate on this.*

It

It is but a mean Compliment to *Smith* to say, that, *he as far as it appears, was the honefter Man of the two*. For when one Man has been represented as very dishonest, to say, that another is *the honefter of the two*, implies that both of them are dishonest, though in different Degrees. If by this Comparison a Reflection was intended upon *Smith*, as well as upon the Doctor, then no Integrity of Conscience in a Person, who fails in Point of Form, in order to testify his Honesty, can save him from this Letter-writer's Censure.

What remains of the Letter, as it aims at no Argument, might be passed over unregarded. I will only observe, that the reverend Letter-writer's Language as well as Reflections are such, as can no more be defended upon the Principles of Honour, and Morality, than of Christianity; and that no Man, who thinks he has any Reputation to lose, even though he despised the Threatnings of the Gospel, would venture to publish such unmannerly, and personal Abuse, were it not for the Hopes of being always concealed.

The Reader will be pleased to remember, that the Proposition which has raised the Letter-writer's highest Indignation,

and against which he has pointed his strongest Batteries is this—" That every Subscriber to the Articles must be understood to subscribe to them, in no other Meaning whatever, but such as is apprehended by him to be consonant to the infallible and authoritative Word of God." Whether the Arguments produced by him, are sufficient to invalidate this Proposition, is left to the Judgment of the Reader ; as likewise, whether, if a Subscriber to the Articles must be understood to subscribe in some *other* Meaning, but such as is apprehended by him to be consonant to the Word of God, the Letter-writer has informed us, what that *other* Meaning is, and how it is reconcileable, I say not with Scripture, but with the *protestant* Doctrines of the Church of *England*.

I have now finished the uneasy Task, which I imposed upon myself, of going through this abusive Letter, and considering every Part of it, which has an Appearance of Argument. My Endeavour has been to understand and answer the reverend Writer of it, in his own Sense, which, if I have any where mistaken, the only Reason was, because I could not discern it.

Sorry

Sorry I am to say, that there are some, who in Words express, and by their Actions testify a much deeper Resentment against Errors in point of Speculation, than against the highest, as well as most open Enormities in Practice. The least Deviation in Faith from that which they have fixed in their own Minds, to be the Standard of *Orthodoxy*, alarms their Fears, and raises their Outcries, with much stronger Emotions, than a public Violation of the most important Branches of moral Duty. But sure a small Degree of calm Reflection is enough to convince an unprejudiced Mind, that the supreme Use of religious Faith is to excite a virtuous Behaviour. From whence it is not difficult to be inferred, that Faith, though perfectly *Orthodox*, if it fails in its supreme End, is of little, if of any Use; and that, if it happens to be erroneous, and has at the same Time no ill Influence upon Morals, it can be but little, if at all hurtful.

Comparison of Crimes ought to be made with Caution, because weak Understandings draw Encouragement from it to commit the lesser, when all ought to be avoided. Persecution for Conscience Sake appears to be a Sin of high Malignity. No Man without being enlightened by
 Inspi-

Inspiration, can exactly discern the Faith of another, neither, if he could discern it, can he certainly know that it is *criminally* erroneous. Persecution is therefore absolutely unjustifiable in the first Instance, as it is grounded upon the mere Supposition of a Fault, incapable of being proved. Again; can the Persecutor be infallibly assured that his *own* Faith is right? Look round the World, and I fear it will be found, that the most Ignorant, have generally been the most Zealous, and that Persecution has always raged with the most implacable Fury, on the Side of Error. Further; he who persecutes another for Matters of mere Faith, usurps an Authority, to which no mortal Man has a Claim, and which by the Nature of it, may be clearly seen to reside in God alone. God is emphatically the *Searcher of Hearts*; and he only has the Right of judging them. *Why judgest thou another Man's Servant? To his own Master he standeth or falleth.* Add to this; that Persecution, though in a less Degree, contains in it a Violation of *some* of the most important moral Precepts of Christianity; and that when it is permitted to have its full Scope, it never stops short of the Violation almost of them *all*.

Present-

* Presentments are seldom to be encouraged, and never but in Cases of open Immorality, or high Neglect; and not even then, without previous, and repeated Admonition. It would be a sad Grievance upon the Clergy, were it understood to be the Duty of Church-wardens to present them for every Omission, in the Use of the Liturgy, and every Deviation from the Rubrics, and Canons. The Laity judge and act with more Candour, and a better Sense of Christian Charity, than to suppose this; and it would be strange indeed, if *Clergymen* should judge, or act otherwise.

If a Minister knows that the *Athanasian* Creed, for Instance, is offensive to a considerable Part of his Congregation, and if he himself judges that some Clauses of it, are difficult to be understood, and liable to be mistaken, I cannot help thinking that it is more agreeable to the Temper of the Gospel, for him to omit it, than to use it. Nor could Christian Faith suffer any Injury by such Omission, when the Apostles Creed is used in its Stead, and all Persons are left at full Liberty, to consult the Scriptures. But the extraordinary Zeal which
some

2. whether
more agreeable
to the Rubric -

* See Dr. Carter's Sermon preached in Deal Chapel, August 9, 1752.

some exprefs for the Use of the *Athanasian Creed*, feems to infer, that Christian Faith, neceffary to Salvation, may be at leaft fafer, if not eafier learned from *that*, than from the *pure* and *perfect* Word of God; an Imagination, in my Opinion, equally groundlefs and pernicious.

I will add no more except an earneft Prayer to Almighty God, that he by his gracious Providence, and in his own good Time, will caufe to be removed from public Worship in every Nation profefling the Gospel, whatever is offensive to himfelf, or is too apt to disturb fcrupulous Minds; and that he will be pleafed to infpire all Christians with mutual good Will, Candour, Forbearance, and Condefcenfion, as becometh the Difciples of the benevolent Jefus, his Son, and our Lord and Judge.

F I N I S.

I humbly think upon the whole, & if any man fcruples the Articles, or any part of them, it is better for him not to fubfcribe. Nor can I fay much in commendation of thofe who chufe to fubfcribe them in a fense different from their plain original meaning. But I leave all other men to their own private fentiments, & with all men to be loved as much as I wish them

to be for ever given to be with

THE Publisher of this Pamphlet thinks it necessary to say, that his only Reason for reprinting a Letter, universally, and justly condemned, is, that the Reader may have an immediate Opportunity of comparing the Animadversions with the Passages to which they refer.

*A Letter from a Clergyman in the
Country, to his Friend at Deal.*

S I R,

I Thank you for communicating to me the crying Sermon; that extraordinary Performance which has made so much Noise that I was curious of seeing it. I must own upon a Perusal of it, I could find nothing in it to occasion Tears. Surely if it could excite any Passion in the Audience, it must be that of Indignation; to hear a Man shuffling and prevaricating with Articles, Creeds, Subscriptions, Declarations, and even Scripture it self. The Articles he subscribes to he gets rid of at once by a mental Reservation. The Creeds he gives a very lame Account of, full of Errors and Mistakes; one of them (the

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"Even in this very day a doctrinal interpretation [of the articles] will not be allowed." The true Dissenter (1685) p. 63.

Nice Creed) he wisely says nothing of, as; indeed, it would not have served his Purpose. I shall remark to you an Omission or two of the same Kind, as a Sample of his Dexterity, in slipping over a Thing too hot to be touched.

When he quotes the 6th Article, he ought to have given his Audience the 8th too, (*viz. The three Creeds; Nice Creed, Athanasius's Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed: For they may be proved by most certain Warrants of Holy Scripture.*) This would have been but dealing fairly by them; but then this would unhappily have let them into the Secret how grossly he prevaricated with God and Man when he subscribed to it, and afterwards (reading over the 39 Articles) declared his unfeigned Assent in the Face of God and the Congregation, and acknowledged all and every the Articles therein contained, (being in Number Nine and Thirty, besides the Ratification,) to be agreeable to the Word of God.

Behold, he is now Preaching against the Truth of this; and proving one of those Creeds (at least) to be contrary to the Word of God.

Again, speaking of the *Athanasian Creed*, and insinuating to the People, as if that Assertion in it—*In this Trinity none is afore*

or after other : None is greater or less than another—clashed with that Assertion of our Saviour's—*My Father is greater than I*—he leaves out a Clause in the same Creed, which saith—*Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead : and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood.* But this was not for his Purpose ; it would have been to acquaint the Hearers that it was very reconcileable with *John* xiv. 28. and would have a little interfered with the Sense he would give of the few Texts he has picked out and strung together. But is not this to suppress and conceal from his Audience the Things that might lead them into the whole Truth, and teach them to compare Scripture with Scripture ?

But what would you have the poor Man do ? He is floundering in the Mud, and must get out as well as he can. The *Athanasian* Creed sticks in his Throat ; and had he said any Thing true of the *Nicene*, it would have choaked him. However he comforts himself with this, That when he signed and subscribed to these Articles, it was only as far as they were agreeable to Scripture [*in no other Meaning whatever but such as is apprehended to be consonant to the infallible and authoritative Word of God.* *Serm.* p. 15.] 'Apprehended by whom ? By himself ?—What a pitiful Evasion is this ? What a shuffling and play-

ing Fast and Loose with Things sacred? Our Church requires those, whom it intrusts with the Ministry of the Word, that they may teach nothing that is contrary to sound Doctrine, to subscribe to these Articles, which in its own Judgment it holds to be agreeable to the Word of God, and what ought thoroughly to be received and believed, as they may be proved by most certain Warrant of Holy Scripture. And this it does for the avoiding of Diversities of Opinions, and for the Establishing of Consent touching true Religion, (as the Title to the 39 Articles set forth.) Now by Means of this Subterfuge of his, it establishes no Consent; it avoids no Diversity of Opinion: But the Test is eluded; and the Subscription made of none Effect, by one who is of a different Opinion from the Church, and yet can by the Help of a secret Reserve subscribe to it, and so impose upon the Church in order to betray it. This trifling with Oaths and Subscriptions has something so black in it, that it calls for further Animadversion.

It is notorious to every one, who is of the Communion of the Church established, that our Church does not suffer any Person to be ordained, or to be intrusted with any Publick Office, or Administration in the same, or admitted to any Benefice,

nifice, without subscribing the 39 Articles, declaring his Belief of the same, and acknowledging all and every the Articles therein contained to be agreeable to the Word of God. This Method is taken to secure the Truth of Doctrine, and the right Faith of such as are to instruct others, and (as the Act of Parliament which enacts this Subscription expresse it) *That the Churches of the Queen's Majesty's Dominions may be served with Pastors of sound Religion* — 13 Eliz. c. 2.

It is taken for granted therefore, as all Men must see, that those who subscribe, do approve what they subscribe to, as sound and true. And for the avoiding all Ambiguity and Doubtfulness, they are required by the 36th Canon to subscribe in this Order and Form of Words; setting down both their Christian and Surname, viz. I N. N. *do willingly and ex animo subscribe, &c.* Now why is all this Caution used but to secure and testify to others our hearty Belief and Approbation of all and every the Articles therein contained? What our Church affirms to be agreeable to the Word of God, and to be proved by most certain Warrants of Holy Scripture, *that* do we affirm and openly declare when we subscribe, to be in our Judgment and Belief agreeable to the Word of God, and that it may be proved by most certain War-

Warrants of Holy Scripture. We do willingly and *ex animo*, i. e. sincerely and from the Heart subscribe. And how can we get off from this by a mental Reservation, without a manifest Breach of moral Honesty, and a Violation of all the Ties and Obligations that can be laid upon Man? If we take an Oath, we take it in the Sense of the Imposers, if we solemnly declare and subscribe our Belief of a Point of Doctrine, we do it in the Sense of the Imposers, i. e. our Ecclesiastical Governors, who each in their several Provinces and Dioceses require this Subscription of all who are to be ordained. The Subscription is demanded for the Satisfaction of our Ecclesiastical Superiors, touching our Sentiments in Religious Matters: It implies in it therefore all that is necessary in order to give the Satisfaction intended; and, consequently, must be understood in such a Sense as will answer this Purpose. There is an End at once to all Laws, Tests and Subscriptions, if such an Elusion of them may be admitted. The Test to be taken, the Subscription required, the Oath to be administred, is easily set aside by such a shameful Evasion. The Fences that the Wisdom of our Legislature, and the Care of our spiritual Governors have provided, to prevent any Unsoundness of Doctrine, or Depravation of the Faith;
and

and that nothing but the genuine and pure Doctrines of Christianity be taught and inculcated to the People, are all broken through and trampled upon, to let in an Inundation of Heresies, and the Confusion of *Babel*.

But I cannot better urge the Point I am speaking of, than in the Words of Dr. *Conybeare*, (the now worthy Bishop of *Bristol*) in a Visitation Sermon of his, preached before the late Archbishop *Potter*, then Bishop of *Oxford*, July 20, 1725.

— “A Subscription to Articles is a Declaration of our Belief; and implies an Assent to the Truth of those Propositions, which are contained in them.”

All the Considerations therefore that can be urged, to prove our Obligation to Moral Honesty, are so many Arguments of our Duty to subscribe without Equivocation or Reserve: Nor can any thing be urged to justify or excuse a Prevarication in this Respect, which will not tend to destroy all mutual Trust and Confidence among Men. Whosoever therefore is not really perswaded that the Doctrines contained in our Articles are true, cannot subscribe without an high Violation of Moral Honesty, and a breaking in upon the fundamental

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Principle on which all Society must be built.

For the same Reasons must we censure and condemn a subscribing to our Articles with this Reservation, *viz. As far as they are agreeable with Scripture*; this being a Way of eluding these Tests of our religious Opinions and in effect no Subscription at all. Are the Articles of the Church of *England* really agreeable with Scripture; or are they not? If they are not, then every honest Man should decline any Subscription to them; because by this Act, he openly professes his Belief, that they are agreeable with Scripture. But if any Persons will however insist on this Reservation, then let them consider that the Subscription and the Reservation, taken together, amount to this, *viz. I do declare that these Articles are agreeable with Scripture, so far forth as they are agreeable with Scripture.* This is as much a trifling with common Sense, as with common Honesty." *Bp. Cony Beare's Sermon.*

The Extract I have made from this judicious Writer's Sermon is urged so home, and is so pertinent to the Occasion I cite it for, as if it had been penned on purpose to silence him, and fill him with Shame and Confusion. It is such Reasoning as cannot be gainsaid; unless it be

be by one who is resolv'd to throw off common Sense and common Honesty at the same time.

I shall only add, what surely must confound him, (since, as you tell me, he seems to pay greater Regard to the Opinions of Lawyers than to those of our Divines) the Resolution of all the Judges of *England* in the Case.

My Lord Chief Justice Coke says, (*Inst.* 4. c. 74.) "I heard *Wray*, Chief Justice in the King's-Bench, Pasch. 23 *Eliz.* report, that where one *Smith* subscribed to the said 39 Articles of Religion, with this Addition (so far forth as the same were agreeable to the Word of God) it was resolv'd by him and all the Judges of *England*, that this Subscription was not according to the Statute of 13 *Eliz.* because the Statute required an absolute Subscription, and this Subscription made it conditional; and that this Act was made for avoiding of Diversity of Opinions, &c. and by this Addition the Party might by his own private Opinion take some of them to be against the Word of God, and by this means Diversity of Opinions should not be avoided, which was the Scope of the Statute, and the very Act itself touching Subscription made hereby of none Effect."

This decisive Judgment proves beyond all Exception, that in the Eye of the Law the Subscription required by the 13 *Eliz.* necessarily implies a Profession and Belief of the Truth of the Articles subscribed to.

Let the Doctor ruminate upon this.—
The Person here mentioned, one *Smith*, as far as it appears, was the honestest Man of the two. For he openly professed his Subscription to be conditionally only; but here the Doctor's Subscription, we know, was absolute, (or it would never have been admitted of) nevertheless he had this secret Reserve in his own Mind, *So far forth, &c.* May not any Oath, Promise or Engagement, though never so solemn, be evaded by the same Means? But, you see, he is a mere *Proteus*;

——— *Bind him who can,
This Thoughtless, Thankless, Inconsistent Man.*

He may squabble with Mayors and Corporations as he pleases, but if he trifles with Oaths and Subscriptions, and with the most solemn Declarations that he has so avowedly, so repeatedly made in the Face of the Congregation, let him find out a Communion that will admit of him. He may go to the *Hettentots* or the *Mo-bocks*,—though, by our latest Accounts
of

of them, they are so far humanized, as to detest such Perfidy. Whither then can he have Recourse? He must be like the wild *Arab*.—His Hand will be against every Man, and every Man's Hand against him.

I am, Yours, &c.

P. S. I shall go on further, if you desire it, in my Remarks upon the Sermon, and shew his Abuse of the Creeds, his Abuse of Scripture, and his Abuse of his Ministerial Function, by debasing the Pulpit in the Manner he has done.

The latter referred to.

of them, they are to be humanized, as to detect such folly. Whether then can he have Recourse? He must be like the wild Arabs—His Hand will be against every Man, and every Man's Hand against him.

I am, Sir, &c.

P. S. I shall go on further, if you desire it, in my Remarks upon the Sermon, and show his Abuse of the Creed, his Abuse of Scripture, and his Abuse of his Ministerial Function, by discussing the subject in the manner he has done.